

Message Text

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SUBJ: CROATIAN MINORITY ISSUE IN AUSTRIA ASSUMING
INCREASED IMPORTANCE

REF: VIENNA 8442

SUMMARY: PRO-SOCIALIST ELEMENTS IN CROATIAN MINORITY IN
BURGENLAND TOOK PUBLIC POSITION IN RECENT DAYS DISPUTING
(1) IMPLICITLY NEED FOR FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF STATE
TREATY ARTICLE 7 RE MINORITY RIGHTS FOR CROATS AND (2)
EXPLICITLY YUGOSLAVIA'S CLAIM TO SPEAK ON BEHALF OF
PROTECTION OF CROATIAN MINORITY. CONSERVATIVE CROATIAN
CULTURAL ASSOCIATION, IN OPPOSITION TO PRO-SOCIALIST
GROUP, HAVE COUNTERED WITH ITS OWN PUBLIC MANIFESTATION
CONTAENDING THAT CROATS WANT FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF
ARTICLE 7 AND YUGOSLAVIA HAS LEGITIMATE INTEREST IN
ATTEMPTING TO PROTECT CROAT AND SLOVENE MINORITY RIGHTS
IN AUSTRIA. THSES DEVELOPMENTS SUGGEST SOCIALISTS HAVE
DECIDED TO POLARIZE CROATIAN MINORITY INTO TWO GROUPS
IN ATTEMPT TO COUNTER DISCRIMINATION CHARGES OF SOME
CROATS AND THEIR YOGOSLAV SUPPORTERS. MOVE SEEMS ILL
CONSIDERED AND DOES NOT BRING ISSUE CLOSER TO RESOLUTION;
IN FACT, CROATIAN MINORITY CONTROVERSY, WHICH FIRST
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BEGAN AS FALLOUT FROM SLOVENE MINORITY ISSUE IN

CARINTHIA, IS NOW ASSUMING ITS OWN INDEPENDENT IMPORTANCE.
END SUMMARY

1. SOCIALIST MAYORS AND COUNCILMEN OF CROATIAN AND MIXED-ETHNIC COMMUNITIES IN BURGENLAND, AT MEETING IN STEINBRUNN NOVEMBER 17, ADOPTED RESOLUTION STATING THAT "OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF CROATS IN BURGENLAND IS NOT INTERESTED IN FORMALISTIC IMPLEMENTATION OF STATE TREATY ARTICLE 7 AS IS BEING DEMANDED BY CERTAIN CIRCLES." REFERRING TO YUGOSLAV COMMENTARY ON MINORITY ISSUES IN AUSTRIA, RESOLUTION FURTHER STATES THAT "WE WANT NO FOREIGN INTERVENTION IN OUR INTERNAL AFFAIRS" AND "YUGOSLAVIA HAS NO AUTHORITY TO SPEAK ON OUR BEHALF." STEINBRUNN CONFERENCE ALSO CALLED FOR POLLING OF VOTERS OF BURGENLAND CROATIAN AND MIXED-ETHNIC COMMUNITIES ON QUESTIONS WHETHER:

(A) CROATS ARE OBJECT OF DISCRIMINATION,
(B) MINORITY CLAIMS (SIC) REMAIN TO BE MET AND
WHETHER
(C) ARTICLE 7 OF STATE TREATY SHOULD BE STRICTLY IMPLEMENTED.

2. SOCIALIST NATIONAL ASSEMBLY DEPUTY FRIEDRICH ROBAK, HIMSELF A BURGENLAND CROAT AND LEADER OF PRO-ASSIMILATIONIST ELEMENT IN CROATIAN MINORITY, GAVE A FOLLOW-UP RADIO INTERVIEW DISPUTING IN EVEN STRONGER TERMS YUGOSLAV CLAIM TO SPEAK ON BEHALF OF PROTECTING MINORITY RIGHTS OF CROATS IN AUSTRIA.

3. CONSERVATIVE CROATIAN CULTURAL ASSOCIATION OF BURGENLAND, WHICH IS AT LOGGER-HEADS WITH ROBAK GROUP, MOVED QUICKLY INTO FRAY BY MUSTERING ITS OWN GROUP OF MAYORS TWO DAYS LATER TO PROTEST PRO-SOCIALIST GROUP'S RESOLUTION AND LATTER GROUP'S CALL FOR VOTER POLL ON QUESTIONS OF DISCRIMINATION AND ARTICLE 7 IMPLEMENTATION. ASSOCIATION CONTENDS YUGOSLAVIA HAS RIGHT TO INTEREST ITSELF IN PROTECTION OF CROAT AND SLOVENE MINORITIES IN AUSTRIA, THAT IMPLEMENTATION OF TREATY ARTICLE 7 IS LEGITIMATE WISH OF CROAT PEOPLE AND THAT BY HOLDING ITS MEETING IN GERMANY, PRO-SOCIALIST ROBAK GROUP CLEARLY
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EXPOSED ITSELF AS BEING OPPOSED TO MAINTAINING CROATIAN CULTURAL IDENTITY.

4. LATEST SOCIALIST-LED CONFRONTATION WITHIN RANKS OF CROATIAN MINORITY IN BURGENLAND REPRESENTS HIGHLY QUESTIONABLE EFFORT TO COUNTER AND UNDERCUT CHARGES BEING MADE BY SOME CROATIAN ELEMENTS AND THEIR YUGOSLAV SUPPORTERS CONCERNING DISCRIMINATION AND NON-FULFILLMENT

OF ARTICLE 7 OF TREATY. ROBAK'S UNDERTAKING OF PUTTING CROATIAN PRO-SOCIALIST ELEMENT OF RECORD AS IMPLICITLY FAVORING ASSIMILATION IS BOUND TO GENERATE MORE CONTROVERSY IN CROATIAN MINORITY RANKS IN BURGEN LAND WITHOUT HOWEVER MOVING ISSUE ANY CLOSE TO SOLUTION. ON THE CONTRARY, SOCIALISTS IN BURGENLAND (PRESUMABLY ACTING AT LEAST WITH SUFFRAGE OF SOCIALIST FEDERAL GOVERNMENT) SEEM UNINTENTIONALLY DETERMINED BY THEIR CLUMSY HANDLING OF ISSUE TO TURN BURGENLAND'S HITHERTO PEACEFUL ETHNIC LANDSCAPE INTO MELANGE OF CONTENDING GROUPS CLAIMING TO SPEAK ON BEHALF OF VARIOUS MINORITIES. CONTROVERSY IN BURGENLAND OVER CROATIAN MINORITY, WHICH BEGAN AS FALLOUT FROM SLOVENE MINORITY ISSUE IN CARINTHIA (SEE REFTTEL), NOW APPEARS TO BE TAKING ON MAJOR SIGNIFICANCE OF ITS OWN. HOMES

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